

Civil Rights history comes to life in "Periphery" play

PERFORMANCE EXPLORES HUMAN SIDE OF GREENSBORO'S CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY, DRAMATIZES WOOLWORTH'S SIT-INS

By Meg Holden
STAFF WRITER

"It was personal. We really hadn't planned on starting anything."

With these words, an unnamed character introduces the audience to "Periphery," Ed Simpson's play about the Woolworth's sit-ins in 1960. A small audience gathered in the Community Center Multi-purpose Room on March 2 to watch the play, brought to campus by the Bonner Center for Community Learning.

Subtitled "Conversations about the Greensboro Four," "Periphery" follows characters on both sides of the sit-ins. Black and white protesters alternate scenes with characters who oppose the sit-ins and those who cannot understand why the protests are happening.

"The play puts a human face on every point of view," said actor Thomas Barker. "It isn't, if you'll excuse the expression, a black and white issue."

Barker played the role of Jerry, a protester who opposed the Woolworth's sit-ins. According to Barker, everyone has the capacity to act like Jerry.

"If we get scared enough, if we feel like our rights or our way of life are being attacked, it's easy to turn into Jerry," said Barker.

Though the play encompasses characters in many different situations, the two central protagonists are Mike, a white student at Guilford College, and Eugene, a black student at The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina (now North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University). The young men struggle with the decision to join the protesters. Eugene explicitly defies his father by joining the sit-ins.

"I need to be a better man so I can make a better world," said Eugene, played by Bobby Pittman. "I need to join them."

The climax of the play comes when Mike and Eugene are arrested and their fathers meet at the jail. Phil, Mike's father, and Nate, Eugene's father, must reconcile their sons' idealism with their own conceptions of what is moral and appropriate.

The play's portrayal of characters who are not central to the sit-ins gave the play its name, "Periphery," which refers to the edge or boundary of an area. According to

Barker, the characters in the play are all people "on the edge" of the Woolworth's sit-ins and subsequent demonstrations. Even the 1960's were situated on a periphery: the end of one era and the beginning of a new one.

James Sims, who played Nate, said that his participation in the play was a result of reading the script and being affected by its powerful narrative.

"Once I knew the story, I just had to be part of it," said Sims.

Lee Wilson, a first-year at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, portrayed Mike.

"It's very important to remind people what happened (during the sit-ins)," said Wilson. "Especially people who haven't heard the story, who aren't from around here, or young people."

According to Director of Community Learning James

Shields, "Periphery" is an example of the power of the arts.

"We should be using the arts to educate the youth," said Shields.

The young people in attendance — James and Washington Weah, 11 and 12, and Marie and Claudine Mukome, 11 and 13 — said that they enjoyed the play.

"I liked the way they showed the story and the way they acted," said Washington.

"I didn't know the story already," said Claudine, "but I liked it a lot."

Guilford students are told that they can "become more." In "Periphery," Mike uses what he learns about social responsibility at Guilford to stand up for what he believes is right. He quotes Gandhi, reminding the audience to "be the change you want to see in the world."



An intimate audience gathered in the Community Center Multi-purpose Room on March 2 to witness the production of "Periphery," Ed Simpson's play about the Woolworth's sit-ins in 1960. (Left) Jenny (played by **Alison Williams**) acts sophisticated while Mike (**Lee Wilson**) tries to make a move. (Right) Lawrence (**Woodrow Bumbry**) tells his son Eugene (**Bobby Pittman**) that his place is not in Woolworth's, but in his father's business.

Changes to housing applications make process more clear

By Meg Holden
STAFF WRITER

Ryan Sanders was returning from studying abroad in Munich when he applied to live off-campus for spring 2011.

"I thought I would be approved because I was almost 22," said Sanders. "I had senior credits, I didn't have any judicial violations, and I wrote this really long essay about why I should be allowed to live off-campus."

Sanders was not approved to live off-campus. So, he tried again.

"I got documentation from the Financial Aid Office showing that I had a lot of debt from student loans and that it would be beneficial financially for me to live off-campus," said Sanders. "Campus Life still said no."

While we do not all have stories like Sanders', every traditional student at Guilford has to deal with housing applications, deadlines, and the lottery at some

point. The process began in February, and will continue until every student is housed — which may be as late as July.

"It is a long process," said Associate Dean for Campus Life Jen Agor. "This allows us to check on and fix glitches, and it allows students to do everything they need to do, like clear holds and pick roommates."

Finding roommates can be a more difficult aspect of the housing process. With this in mind, Campus Life will hold a roommate mixer on Wednesday, March 23, said Residential Living Coordinator Kris Gray. At this event, students without roommates can connect with each other.

According to Gray, the general process for being housed has not changed much in the past several years. Students select roommates and apply for housing and meal plans through BannerWeb.

Students who want to live in a theme house or Hodgins Retreat must fill out a

paper application. New for this year are paper applications for Pope House and mixed-gender suites in Bryan Hall.

"The paper applications are as much for approval from Campus Life as they are for simple computer purposes," said Gray. She explained that the applications are necessary to ensure, for example, that everyone applying to live in Hodgins is a junior or senior.

The paper applications to live off-campus have been around for a while, but this year, there are increased restrictions for who can live off campus.

"The new system is actually more like what we had in place several years ago," said Agor. "When our enrollment numbers were up, we didn't have room to house everybody, so we relaxed the restrictions and made it easier for people to get approved. Now we have the space, but the approval process is so subjective that it's

hard to explain why one person may be approved and another denied."

Gray does not foresee a change in the number of applications to live off-campus or in the number of people who are approved. "Essentially all we've done is made the process more black and white," said Gray.

"The process will be clearer and fairer," said Agor.

Sanders approves of the revised requirements for off-campus approval.

"I like that it has been reformed to be clearer," said Sanders. "I probably would have been approved to live off campus under the reformed system."

Nevertheless, Sanders is on campus now, and plans to stay on-campus until he graduates.

"I realized that I do want to be a part of the on-campus community," said Sanders. "I like being on-campus and being close to everything."